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SOCIAL DISTANCE, MOTIVATION AND OTHER FACTORS CONTRIBUTING
TO SUCCESS IN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AND ACHIEVEMENT AMONG
ADOLESCENT MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
English Composition:
Teaching English as a Second Language

by
Alice Yvette Muniz-Cornejo
September 2002

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ABSTRACT

Adolescent immigrant English learners who enter U.S. schools at the secondary level are faced with challenges that distinguish their experience in second language (L2) acquisition from that of children and adults. Some of the challenges they face include limited time to acquire academic English proficiency in reading and writing, difficulty in assimilating into English-speaking American culture, and limited programs and services at the secondary level. In recent years, researchers have studied post-secondary students' transition from secondary to post-secondary schools. While some research has noted that second language acquisition during adolescence is challenging due to psychosocial and personality factors, little research has been conducted about the specific factors that contribute to adolescent immigrants' success or lack of success in second language acquisition, particularly in the area of academic reading and writing. Additionally, some research has shed light on the needs of different ethnic groups, but more investigation is needed into the needs of Mexican immigrants, who are part of the largest immigrant group in California. Specifically, it would help to know whether adolescent Mexican immigrant

English learners have a more difficult time adapting to life in the U.S., and if so, how that affects their second language acquisition.

The purpose of this thesis is to analyze social distance and other motivational factors impacting the academic English development of Mexican English learner students who have entered the American school system as adolescents (grades 5-12) in order to identify the characteristics and needs of second language learners at this level. Twenty-four immigrant English learners from Mexico were given a survey that attempted to gauge their degree of social distance. Interviews with the students and their parents were conducted as well. The students' academic records and various test scores were evaluated to measure their level of academic progress and success. Additionally, after students were grouped by academic achievement level based on GPA, their interview responses were further analyzed to determine what characteristics, if any, appear to contribute to success or lack of success in acquiring academic English.

The study revealed that social distance does correlate to some extent with overall academic achievement and with achievement in academic English, although there

were some exceptions to the general pattern of greater social distance being linked with lower achievement. Analysis of the interviews, however, offered some interesting explanations for these exceptions; it also provided a window into some other general factors contributing to success in academic achievement and academic L2 acquisition. Friendships, media behaviors, parental involvement, educational background (both of the student and the parents) and instrumental motivation are all factors that impact L2 acquisition and overall academic achievement. The case studies of five students also demonstrated the individual variation in particular factors that shape these students. Additionally, the study revealed that students do not necessarily increase proficiency in English with each year they reside in the U.S. In fact, many students are at least a year or two behind, which suggests that higher levels of proficiency in reading and writing take much longer to acquire.

In light of these findings, I make several recommendations for developing high school curricula that address the needs of Mexican adolescent English learners. At the programmatic level, schools can consider a dual-language immersion, which could facilitate the further

development of higher-level academic literacy skills that might be more easily transferred from L1 to L2. A dual-language immersion program would also help students form relationships with English-speaking, non-Latinos who value the Spanish language and Latino culture. Schools need to make an effort to help build better relationships between diverse groups on campus and to create alliances between the school and home. In individual classrooms, teachers can explicitly teach academic and cultural expectations and use more cooperative learning activities. Parents need to learn to adapt to some of the basic cultural traits of American schools so they can get more actively involved and become a better and stronger source of support and encouragement, and students need to recognize the impact that their own attitudes and efforts can have on their success in academic English.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

As a practitioner of English language arts at the secondary level, I have always been interested in the needs of English learners, those students who are learning English as a second language. In 2000, our district was selected to undergo a compliance review by the Department of Education's Comité de Padres. While it is no secret that our secondary level English learners face substantial challenges in achieving English language proficiency and academic success in core content areas, this recent compliance review highlighted some important problem areas in our district's program. I realized even more strongly than before that it is imperative that we closely examine the needs of adolescent English learners, especially those from the largest non-English language group in California, that is, Spanish. California, in fact, has the highest percentage of Limited English Proficient (LEP) students than any other state in the nation - 24.90% to be exact (Jehlen, 2002).

Until recently, research on language acquisition has primarily considered the needs of child and adult

learners. What is rarely addressed is how adolescents learn a second language at the secondary levels. They are not children, yet they may not possess the intellectual maturity of adults. Children learn naturally and practically unconsciously while adults often learn intentionally and for a specific purpose. Where does that leave adolescent learners? Specifically, what factors encourage or inhibit language acquisition for the adolescent learner? As much of the second language learning (L2) research has focused on international ESL students at the university level, questions also remain of the needs of adolescent immigrant students, in particular those who attend some elementary and/or secondary school in the U.S.

Recently, a number of studies have focused on one language acquisition issue impacting immigrant adolescent and young adult learners: difficulty in acquiring academic literacy in English (Blanton, 1999; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Hartman and Tarone, 1996; Reid, 1998; Rodby, 1996; and Scarcella, 1996). Even highly motivated immigrant students who excel in high school encounter difficulties when they transition to the university level. In one study by Frodesen and Starna (1999), bilingual students

who had passed the University of California's system wide Subject A exams actually revealed serious problems in their college writing classes with regard to the number and type of grammar and language errors. They concluded that, "the L2 writer profiles ...underscore the complexity of acquiring academic written competence in a second language" (p.77).

Ferris (1999), who studied how immigrant students respond to teacher feedback on writing and the overall revision process, distinguishes between international and immigrant students and explains that "even immigrant students who have resided in the United States for a number of years may still be acquiring academic literacy skills, although they may be highly fluent in everyday English" (p. 145). She adds that immigrant students may also lack critical thinking skills that are expected at the university level.

Another study comparing international university students to immigrant students was conducted by Muchisky and Tangren (1999), who were interested in the performance of immigrant students in the university's academic intensive English programs (IEP). Among their findings, they noted that immigrant students tended to have less

self-motivation and academic motivation than international students and that they "display a higher level of aural skills than writing skills" (p.224).

Although there is increasing research interest in immigrant English learners, more research is needed, particularly with Mexican immigrant English learners - given their large presence in California secondary schools. As Mexicans share a border with California, they represent the largest group of immigrants in the state. In fact, "for the 1961-1984 period, Mexico has been the major sender of immigrants to the U.S. with nearly 1.4 million Mexicans immigrating legally to the U.S. during the period. Again, the actual number of immigrants is much greater due to the untold numbers entering the U.S. without proper documentation" (Saenz & Greenlees, 1996, p.11). Spanish speakers, many of whom come from Mexico, make up 83% of the English learners in California (CA Department of Education, 2001 Language Census).

While most immigrant and English learner groups face certain challenges when entering the U.S. public school system, Mexican students may be at a particular disadvantage compared to other students because many lack formal schooling and development of cognitive and academic

abilities. Students from China, for example, may possess strong abilities in math and science (Hartman & Tarone, 1999), which enable them to more readily transfer their knowledge and to succeed in classes and standardized tests in those areas. This lack of academic abilities among some Mexican English learners often results in negative attitudes toward the group as a whole.

The adoption of state standards in recent years and the implementation of the Stanford 9, STAR test and the High School Exit Exam is also having a profound impact on these English learners and the high schools that they attend because there is more pressure than ever to not only learn English, but also to master content-standards in core subject areas. If schools and society expect these students to become effective and productive members of American society, it behooves us all to pay attention to the factors that directly affect their success in English and in academics.

Like other immigrant English learner student groups, Mexican adolescent English learners may also deal with various language learning challenges related to culture and identity issues, including the social distance they may feel between the target language culture and their own

culture (Schumann, 1978). To date, however, there is little or no research about how social distance and attitudes toward English language and mainstream English-speaking culture affect teenage English learners, who are already burdened with the difficulties of adolescence and must also wrestle with the pressure of trying to fit into a new culture, make new friends, and overcome negative attitudes about their ethnic backgrounds. The research on acculturation and its impact on language acquisition is limited as well (Peirce, 1995; Schumann, 1978), and these studies have not specifically focused on Mexican adolescent English learners.

The purpose of this thesis is to analyze social distance and motivational factors impacting the academic English development of Mexican English learner students who have entered the American school system as older children and adolescents (grades 5-12) in order to better understand the characteristics and needs of second language learners at this level. Particular attention will be paid to how certain motivational factors and students' degree of social distance from mainstream American culture correlates with their degree of language proficiency and general academic achievement. My research

takes a qualitative approach and uses surveys and interview data from Mexican English learners and their parents and teachers from a high school in the Inland Empire area of Southern California. The students' academic records and test scores are also evaluated to measure their level of academic progress and success. I hope to demonstrate that, particularly in California, the social distance and attitudes of adolescent Mexican immigrant students present challenges to their English language learning. Educators, therefore, need to become more aware of the needs of this group and implement programs that directly target these needs; parents can be a better and stronger source of support and encouragement; and students need to realize the impact that their own attitudes and efforts can have on their success in academic English.

Chapter two reviews research on the impact of age differences, motivational factors, and social distance on second language acquisition and relates this research to Mexican immigrant English learners. Chapter three explains the methodology of this study. Chapter four presents the results of the study, and chapter five discusses the implications of these findings.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

A number of recent studies have shed light on the needs of second language learners at different ages. Furthermore, studies have indicated distinct needs of different kinds of second language learners. The purpose of this chapter is to review this research, particularly what it suggests about adolescent immigrant English learners and Mexican immigrants.

Age and Language Learning

In analyzing language learning in adolescents, it is important to consider the influence of age, for there is little doubt that age is a factor in language acquisition. Bley-Vroman (1990), for example, makes several distinctions between children acquiring a first language and adults acquiring a second language: "[it] differs in degree of success, in the character and uniformity of the resultant systems, in its susceptibility to factors such as motivation, and in the previous state of the organism" (p.4). However, it is important to note that greater age is not always negatively related to second language acquisition success. For example, although children tend

to have some advantage in achieving native-like fluency, in some ways, "adults have superior language learning capabilities" (Walsh and Diller, 1978). Cummins' (1978) research demonstrates that older learners who have already developed Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) in their native languages generally have an easier time acquiring the second language because they can transfer academic language skills more readily.

Indeed, the idea that an age-based critical period for second language acquisition exists at all is somewhat controversial. Some research has found that English learners have more problems with pronunciation, spelling and grammar as their age of arrival increases (Flege, Komshian, & Liu, 1999); however, Marinova-Todd, Marshall, and Snow (2000) argue that much of the research about speed of acquisition and age differences in language abilities has been misinterpreted and/or misapplied. In fact, through their research, which focused on examining the factors that typically lead to native-like proficiency in L2s for any learner, they conclude that "age does influence language learning, but primarily because it is associated with social, psychological, educational, and other factors that can affect L2 proficiency, not because

of any critical period that limits the possibility of language learning by adults" (p. 28). They also claim that adolescents "can become native-like speakers if their instructional environments are well-structured and motivating" (p.29). However, this and other research on age differences has emphasized acquisition of speaking and listening in a L2, and little work has considered whether age differences influence more advanced levels of proficiency in the areas of reading and writing.

Those few studies that have addressed the influence of age on academic literacy have highlighted the fact that adolescent English learners are different from younger English learners because they have a much smaller time frame in which to gain academic language proficiency. In discussing Cummins' distinction between Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), Diaz-Rico and Weed (1995) explain: "Students who may appear to be fluent enough in English to survive in an all-English classroom may in fact have significant gaps in the development of academic aspects of English. Conversational skills have been found to approach native-like levels within two years of exposure to English, but five or more years may be

required for minority students to match native speakers in CALP". For all practical purposes, students who begin learning English as adolescents, therefore, are at some disadvantage due to their age. Students, for example, who enter a California public school in middle school or high school have to learn academic English in a very short amount of time if they hope to graduate. According to California Pathways (2001), recent research on thousands of secondary school students shows that it takes approximately five to seven years for students in the *most effective programs* to reach the norm on standardized achievement tests (p.19). This kind of pressure may in fact be a deterrent to success, and it may create real obstacles for continuing their education at higher learning institutions.

Even when students do succeed in acquiring enough academic proficiency in English to graduate from high school and get into college, they may still not have acquired adequate levels of academic English because of the great length of time it takes to master CALP. Scarcella (1996) illustrates the problems immigrant English learner students have at UC Irvine:

"Despite the ESL students' many years in the U.S. (on average, about eight years), excellent high school grade point averages (above 3.5, in the upper 12% of their high school graduating classes), and high scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (above 1000), their English language problems prevented them from achieving success in freshman writing courses, and they were required to take ESL courses to address their language difficulties" (p. 131).

If above-average students who have been schooled in the U.S. for an average of eight years are still having trouble with acquiring academic English language proficiency, we can expect even greater problems from students who are in the U.S. for less time. Adolescents who enter American school systems at these later ages face a tremendous challenge. As California Pathways points out, "so much time is required for fully acquiring a second language, in fact, that university level L2 learners in the UC and CSU who have been in the U.S. for ten years sometimes still need ESL instruction" (p.20).

To add to what Marinova-Todd, Marshall, & Snow (2000) discovered about age differences, Peregoy and Boyle (2001)

explain the unique circumstances affecting adolescents' L2 acquisition: "The influence of age on second language acquisition stems from the complex interplay of socio-cultural, cognitive, and personality factors" (p.49).

They presented a case of a Cambodian girl who entered the U.S. at age 12. Because "her academic development in her primary language ceased upon her arrival, she had a great deal of academic English to acquire before she could qualify for the university" (p.50). It was her personal attributes - determination and persistence in achieving her goals - that contributed most to her success in English.

Motivational Factors

Motivation is a key individual factor that may affect second language learning in adolescents. While they may have some motivation for learning, it is not necessarily the same as that of an adult. According to Gardner and Lambert (1972), there are two kinds of motivation in second language learning. The first - instrumental motivation - is focused on a specific result, or goal, such as a better job for being bilingual. The second - integrative motivation - is focused on the desire to

integrate into the target language community. There are questions about whether adolescents have developed either kind of motivation. Instrumental motivation is something that adolescent English learner students may not have fully developed, and the stress of the current testing culture in California high schools may even cause many English learner students to doubt their potential for success in acquiring English to achieve a specific goal, such as graduating from high school. The pressure students feel to pass these tests can be overwhelming, especially for adolescent English learners in California who have to pass the High School Exit Exam (HSEE) in order to graduate. Even if English learner students are showing progress in their English proficiency and achieving good grades in their courses, they may not be able to graduate because their academic language is not yet fully developed. In fact, Heubert (2002) explains that "there are reputable scholars who argue - credibly - that fear of failing a graduation test increases the likelihood that low achievers will leave school" (p.5). As Dunne (2000) notes, "The dropout rate of Latino students [in California] in 1998 was 30 percent, more than four times higher than that of whites, which is about 8 percent. The

dropout rate for black students was 14 percent, according to the National Center for Education Statistics" (p.5).

Though it is not clear what percentage of the 30% of Latinos are English-language learners, these statistics raise the question: How many language minority students are dropping out because of fear? How many decide that they do not really need a high school diploma for the kind of work they can obtain? Since the class of 2004 will be the first to feel the effects of the California HSEE, it is important that we try to determine whether these kinds of tests motivate English learners to learn English more quickly or discourage them to give up on school altogether. The frustration that comes with taking high-stakes tests is enough to destroy at least some of the motivation students might have for succeeding in English and in school. Many English learners already feel a certain amount of anxiety just trying to adjust to American classrooms, and the tests only add to that anxiety.

While both types of motivation have an effect on language acquisition, integrative motivation is more closely tied to learners' attitudes toward second language culture and community. A number of researchers have

focused on the way learners develop certain attitudes toward target language and culture (Dulay & Pepe, 1970; Krashen, 1985; Norton, 1994; Schumann, 1978; and Zentella, 1997). Schumann, for example, has explained social distance as an important factor that significantly affects language learning. Essentially, if second language learners does not feel a sense of belonging to, or assimilation with, the target language culture, they are "socially distant" and will therefore be less successful in acquiring the second language. Following Schumann then, adolescent language learners who feel a solid connection with the target language culture and community would be more successful in acquiring the second language with greater proficiency.

Sometimes, the desire to integrate into the target community depends on the situation of the L2 learner. In the case of the Cambodian girl who entered the U.S. at age 12, Pergoy and Boyle (2001) explain that "she entered the American social scene at an age when cultural expectations of teenagers differed considerably between her home culture and that of the larger society" (pp. 49-50). Although her younger siblings were allowed to participate in many age-appropriate social activities that were

acceptable to both Cambodian and American parents, the 12-year old was not permitted to participate in the kinds of activities American teenagers do for fun because they were not acceptable to her parents. Additionally, because no other Cambodian families attended her school or lived in her neighborhood, any social contact she did have required English. Therefore, although her opportunities to learn English were limited, she was forced to learn the language because there was a need for socialization with members of the target language community. This need does not necessarily exist, however, if the number of first language speakers in the community is large.

The role of attitude and motivation in second language acquisition was also studied by Bialystok and Hakuta (1994), who found that a "learner's attitude and motivation have a modest but persistent effect on the level of language proficiency that he or she will attain" (p. 140). Their main question, however, was *What came first? The attitude or the achievement?* They explain that these two factors feed off of each other and that, together, they ultimately create a more positive context in which "language learning is likely to flourish" (p.140). Given this research, the extent to which Mexican

immigrant adolescents want to become integrated into the community and culture of the U.S., as well as the extent to which they need the language to work and earn a living, may somehow affect their success in English; and success in English may in turn affect their motivation.

Social Distance

As noted earlier, social distance is a term that describes the extent to which second language learners desire to integrate into the target language culture, and it is one of the factors that can impact English language learning in adolescents. Schumann (1978) writes, "Social distance pertains to the individual as a member of a social group which is in contact with another social group whose members speak a different language" (p. 267). Schumann's theory suggests that the greater the social distance between a learner and the target language group, the more difficult second language acquisition will be.

There are different degrees of social distance. When second language learners *give up* their group's lifestyle and values and adopt those of the target language group, they assimilate. When second language learners *adapt* to the lifestyle and values of the target language group, but

at the same times *maintain* their own group's cultural patterns for use in intra-group relations, they acculturate. Second language acquisition would be more difficult when acculturation occurs, and most difficult when second language learners reject the life style and values of the target language group and attempt to maintain their group's cultural pattern as much as possible. This is called preservation.

A number of societal factors determine the degree of social distance between two groups. Schumann explains that certain conditions create social distance while others create social solidarity:

"Social solidarity and hence a good language learning situation will obtain where the second language learner group is non dominant in relation to the target language group, where both groups desire assimilation for the second language learner group, where low enclosure is the goal of both groups, where the two cultures are congruent, where the second language learner group is small and noncohesive, where both groups have positive attitudes toward each other, and where the second language group intends to remain in the target language area for a long time"
(p.).

Thus, some key conditions for social solidarity are the equal desire of *both* groups for "assimilation" and their positive attitudes toward each other. Without these

conditions in place for the second language learner group, language learning becomes a very challenging situation.

Schumann's (1976) pidginization hypothesis explains this challenge by highlighting the negative results of social and psychological distance on second language learning. He conducted a case study on a young man named Alberto, whose native language was Spanish and whose English shared many features with other pidgin languages. In explaining why Alberto's English was pidginized (i.e., not complete), he said, "the speech of the second language learner will be restricted to the communicative function (merely to convey denotative, referential information) if the learner is socially and/or psychologically distant from the speakers of the target language" (p. 267). In Alberto's case, this social distance was due in part to the fact that he was regarded as "belonging to a social group designated as lower class Latin American worker immigrants," which are "subordinate in relation to Americans since they represent an unskilled labor group whose modal socioeconomic status is lower than that of Americans in general" (p.271). Schumann thought this group to be somewhere between preservation and acculturation with regard to their desired integration into American

society, and thus the development of the second language was not as successful because there was a greater degree of social distance.

The relationship between language, cultural identity and integration is also the focus of a study by Bayley and Schechter (1997). Cultural identity is significant in understanding individual attitudes toward the target language community. Bayley and Schechter studied four families (two in Texas; two in California) in terms of their allegiance to Mexican or Mexican-American cultural heritage. The family who was most successful economically (they lived in Texas) actually retained the Spanish language the least. Those who retained the Spanish language most...

...used diaspora metaphors in representing their social condition: Removed from a natural community of Spanish speakers, living in a metropolitan area in which Mexican culture was devalued, and perceiving the constraints on sustaining their sense of roots to be numerous and oppressive, they felt they could not 'let up,' as one parent put it. The home being the arena over which they exercised significant control, cultural identification was best achieved, they believed, through aggressive Spanish maintenance strategy (p.538).

This kind of conscious desire to maintain one's native language and cultural identity may have a strong impact on how well a second language learner will succeed

in the target language and culture, both academically and economically.

Social Distance and Motivational Factors for Mexican Adolescent English Learners

Social distance and motivation have an impact on Mexican immigrant adolescent English learners for a number of reasons. First of all, as adolescents they are at an age in which they are constructing their personal identities (including the degree of social distance between themselves and English-speaking American culture) and considering plans for their future. Secondly, in California, Mexican immigrant L2 learners may experience social distance because they may be regarded as politically, culturally, technically, or economically subordinate to the target language group. The word *immigrant* alone carries a rather negative connotation, particularly in California. Today, immigrants account for approximately one in five of all poor families nationwide, and the highest rates are in California, Texas and South Florida, where Hispanic populations are highest (ABCNews.com, 1999). According to an ABC news report, "More than one in four immigrants who arrived during the 1980s remained impoverished in 1997, which was twice the

rate for natives" (ABC News.com, Sept.2). This comparison demonstrates the lower economic status of immigrant second language learners with respect to the target language group. Also, "in the Southwest and Midwest, Mexican laborers have traditionally supplied the bulk of unskilled labor" (Romo, 1993). One study confirmed that the "use of immigrant workers as a source of flexible, low-skilled, easily replaceable labor in an increasing number of industries is the primary factor that keeps many families trapped in poverty, despite their having more than one full-time worker" (Zolniski & Palermo, 1996).

While economic and cultural subordination appear to be more obvious, there are other areas in which Mexican immigrants, in particular, are regarded as subordinate. Specifically, "Mexican immigrant students are often viewed as lacking intellectual ability instead of lacking English proficiency" (Romo, 1993), which would also make them seem inferior academically. In Santa Barbara, California, there has been serious controversy recently over staggering demographic statistics that indicate "white flight" and segregated schools. For example, at one school, the number of white school-age residents is 308 while the number of white students attending the school is

just 37 (these students have enrolled in other schools). Several factors contribute to this trend, but one appears to be the negative perception of poor Latino students' academic abilities and performance. In an article in the Santa Barbara Daily News-Press, Cohee reports that "some parents believe that schools full of poor Latino children...somehow offer a lesser education. And some worry about their child being one of the only white children in the class" (p. A12). Cohee quotes one school principal as saying...

"It's perception, and lots of racism. I'll never forget when I got this job, a Realtor called me and said I needed to do something about test scores because it was bringing the value of the homes down in the neighborhood'" (Cohee, 2002, p. A12).

As mentioned earlier, the effects of high-stakes tests raises serious questions, and it is evident that in California schools today, these tests are creating a divide between cultures and people. Educators and the public may consider schools with high populations of Latinos and English learners and lower test scores inferior when compared to schools with fewer Latino and

English learner students and higher test scores. This kind of division leads to social distance between groups and a lack of positive attitudes toward each other.

Though Schumann refers to traditional ethnic culture in his theory of social distance, we should consider the distance immigrant students experience from other kinds of culture as well. Academic literacy, for example, is an aspect of adult, middle and upper class culture (Payne, 2001). Even native English-speaking adolescents must grapple with the transition from elementary school level language and literacy to the more advanced, academic language and literacy of middle and high schools. It therefore may be even more difficult for second language learners to adjust to this new academic culture because it is already part of an even larger ethnic culture. Ultimately, adolescent immigrants have to learn to adjust and adapt to more than just one culture during their formative years, which makes second language learning more complicated than that of child or of adult second language learners.

While some may argue that English learner adolescents are adapting to academic culture because they have already developed CALP in their native languages, it must be noted

that not every English learner has had formal schooling in his or her native country. Reid (1998) explains that immigrant ESL students, or "ear" learners, may not be fully literate in their first language due to limited or interrupted schooling; rather, "they have acquired English principally through their ears: they listened, took in oral language (from teachers, TV, grocery clerks, friends, peers), and subconsciously began to form vocabulary, grammar, and syntax rules, learning English principally through oral trial and error" (p.4). International students, or "eye" learners, on the other hand, have learned English visually by studying the vocabulary, verb forms and language rules. Another huge difference between immigrant English learners and international English learners that cannot be ignored is that international students come to the U.S. with a strong familiarity of academic culture. Academic achievement is their primary reason for being in the U.S. Immigrant students, on the other hand, may be struggling to adapt to the larger culture of the U.S. while at the same time trying to survive in the academic setting.

Similar to the ear learners Reid discusses, Mexican adolescent English learners often enter American school

systems without a solid foundation in an academic culture. A 1998 *ERIC Digest* article titled "Qualities of Effective Programs for Immigrant Adolescents with Limited Schooling" states that many of the immigrant students entering schools at the secondary level often have little or no prior formal schooling and academic literacy skills. They may be several years or more below their age-appropriate grade level in terms of academic knowledge and skills. Even those who have attended school have not always developed adequate literacy skills or, more importantly, critical literacy (Blanton, 1999) in their primary language. Adolescent English learners with the greatest disadvantage are those from very poor countries whose academic and critical literacy, particularly in rural areas, may be lacking. Blanton differentiates between functional and critical literacy, explaining that "functionally, but not academically, literate readers decode texts, but seem unaware they can and should (from the academy's perspective) bring their own perspectives to bear in creating a reading" (p. 130). In other words, English learners may know how to read (i.e., decode the text), but they may not know how to comprehend the reading

for analysis. Critical literacy is achieved through what Blanton describes as "textual interaction" (p. 131).

This literature review reveals a great need for more research in the area of second language acquisition for adolescents, particularly in the areas of academic English reading and writing among students from Mexico. Every year, the number of English learners in California increases, and educators are scrambling for ways to better serve their needs, which are unique at the secondary level. Although previous work has discussed the effects of motivation and social distance on second language learning in various student populations, little research has been conducted specifically on how these factors impact Mexican immigrant adolescent English learners. Given the push in California schools for increased test scores and *mastery of* certain content standards, studies are needed particularly into how various factors such as social distance and attitudes affect English learner students' achievement of academic English literacy. The following chapter describes a study that aimed to address these issues in one group of Mexican English learners at local high school.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationships between Mexican adolescent English learners' attitudes and social distance with respect to English language and American culture and their success in English and overall academic achievement. Specifically, I hoped to investigate general characteristics among the students at different levels of academic achievement. In addition, I wished to analyze variation among students at different levels to highlight important factors for their individual success or non-success in English and overall academic achievement.

Data for this study came from student surveys, student grades and test scores, and interviews with students and parents. Using Dulay and Pepe's (1970) test of assimilation as a model, I conducted a survey of 21 Rubidoux High School English learners from Mexico (approximately 5% of the total LEP population at the school), focusing on their attitudes toward the English language, American culture, life in the U.S. and the American people. I also interviewed both students and

their parents about their use of English, their friendships, their attitudes toward non-Latino Americans, and parental involvement in school. Results of the surveys and interviews were correlated with students' overall academic achievement in English. Below, I describe the Rubidoux High School population and the subjects, survey and interview instruments, and the data collection analysis.

School Context and Subjects

According to a recent census (Press Enterprise, 2002), the population of the city of Rubidoux has a median income of \$38,731. The majority of the population has limited education. Close to forty percent of the population has less than a high school education; 24.8% have a high school diploma; 27.3% have had some college; and only 8.1 % have Bachelor's degree or higher. Approximately 25% of the population is foreign-born, and though the census report does not specify countries of origin for the population, this is a community whose Latino population is roughly 55%. The main street is lined with *taquerias*, *carnicerias*, *panaderias* and other

stores and businesses that specifically cater to the Latino residents in the area.

The Latino student population at the high school is about 60%, which nearly mirrors that of the community at large. Approximately 20% of the total student population is considered English learner, or Limited English Proficient (LEP). Ninety eight percent of these LEP students are Spanish speakers. Nearly one-third of all Latinos at Rubidoux High School are LEP. Most of the LEP students' families in the area live in low socio-economic areas of the community and receive free lunch. This is not the case for the majority Anglo-American population of the area, which tends to reside in the middle-class areas of Rubidoux and nearby Pedley.

Subjects for this study were chosen based on their age of arrival in the U.S. and their designation as English learners. First, I looked for students in grades 9-12 who had entered the U.S. in Grade 5 or later, which would fit the profile for an adolescent immigrant English learner. Those students were most likely to be in the three different levels of English Language Development classes, which are designated for students with the lowest proficiency levels in English. Placement in English

classes generally depends first on students' level of English language proficiency and then on grade level. Students whose proficiency level is beginning, beginning-intermediate, or intermediate are placed in appropriate English Language Development (ELD) classes. Students whose proficiency level is early-advanced or advanced are placed in Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) English 9, 10, 11, or 12 according to their grade level. In some cases, students at these higher proficiency levels may choose to be in a mainstream English class with an authorized teacher, which means they are in classes with a majority of native English speakers. When I asked teachers of the SDAIE English classes to identify students who fit the profile of the adolescent immigrant English learner, they identified just over 100 students, which is roughly one-fifth of the entire LEP population at the school. I distributed informed consent forms and debriefing statements to each student and to their parents. Of the 29 students who returned their consent forms, only 24 seemed amenable to participating in this study based on my initial interactions with them, and these were thus the students (and their parents) who served as subjects for the study.

Survey

While the original Dulay and Pepe survey was aimed at the parents of immigrant elementary school children, the questions on this survey addressed the students themselves. My rationale for this change is that these students are in high school and competent enough to answer the questions on their own. The survey is a six-part questionnaire designed (after Dulay and Pepe's seven part questionnaire) to reveal the subjects' attitudes toward American culture (see Appendix A). Each part contains specific questions that are expected to assess positive or negative feelings about assimilation to mainstream American culture in that particular topic area. The six parts are categorized as follows:

1. Plans for residence in the U.S. - questions 1-5

One of the questions in Part 1, for example, is *Does your family plan to return to Mexico in the next three years?* If subjects answer yes to this question, it is considered a negative answer with respect to their desire to assimilate to the culture of the U.S. The assumption is that plans to return to the home country suggest a possible lack of desire to become members of the U.S.

2. Attitudes towards Americans - questions 6-19

Questions 6-19 are aimed at determining the degree of assimilation into mainstream American culture. For instance, one question asks, *Do you hang out with Americans?* If students say yes, this reflects a positive feeling toward assimilation in general. Another question asks, *Do you feel very different from an American?* If students answer yes, this suggests that they do not perceive a strong social identification with Americans.

3. Expectations of life in the U.S. - questions 20-21

Part 3 asks students what they feel about life in the U.S. For example, one question asks, *Have your ideas of what Americans are like changed for the worse compared to what you thought when you were in Mexico?* If students answer positively, then they would be considered more distant.

4. Goals for the future - questions 22 & 23

Part 4 asks if their parents want them to return to Mexico. If the students respond positively to these questions, then it is thought that their ties to the U.S. may not be very strong.

5. Parent Language - questions 24 & 25

Part 5 asks if their parents are trying to learn English and whether they think it is a good idea to learn English. A positive response to these questions suggests a positive attitude toward the target language on the part of the parents, which may influence the students.

6. Preservation - questions 27-31

Part 6 is intended for measuring any degree of preservation of Mexican culture and Spanish language. One of the questions, for example, asks if they would prefer to attend a school for Mexicans only. A positive response to this would indicate a greater degree of preservation, or social distance.

While Dulay and Pepe used only Part 6 to measure social distance, I am looking at all parts together since all of these issues addressed in the questionnaire relate to social distance and socio-cultural contexts. I omitted the last part about political affiliations because I did not feel it was relevant to this study.

Student Interviews

In addition to conducting the survey, I interviewed students about their overall experiences at school and in the U.S. Over the course of the 2001-2002 school year, students were called out of class for the roughly 15-minute interview. The questions were intended to determine students' perceptions of their behaviors as related to attitudes and social distance issues. According to Felipe and Betty Ann Korzenny of the Hispanic Marketing Communication Research in Belmont, California (Korzenny & Korzenny, 1999), market researchers use several indicators to determine acculturation: language usage, media behavior, ties to people in country of origin, value expressions and interpersonal network composition (friends who are of one's own cultural background). Focusing on these and other factors addressed in social distance and motivation research (for example, learning English for a specific goal), I aimed to determine from their interviews how acculturated or assimilated these students seemed to be. The interview questions were categorized as follows (see Appendix B for the complete list of questions):

1. Friendships/Associations - Questions 1,2 & 14

These first two questions were asked to determine whether or not the subjects had non-Spanish speaking friends as well as to determine patterns of language use. For example, *Do you speak to your friends in English or in Spanish?* and *Do you have any non-Latino friends?*

2. Involvement in School and School related Activities - Questions 3-7

Part 2 aimed at investigating students' desire to get involved in American school life. One question, for example, asks, *Do you feel comfortable at this school?*

3. Prejudice & Discrimination/Perceptions of United States - Questions 8 & 13

Question 8 asks *Have you ever experienced any kind of prejudice, discrimination or negative behavior?*

Question 13 asks *Do you feel safe in your community?*

This often led to more in-depth questioning in order to clarify the details of the responses.

4. Attitude toward English and Language Use - Questions 9-12

These questions were asked to determine how students feel about English and when they use English. One

question, for example, asks *Do you watch television in English or in Spanish?*

5. Parental Involvement - Question 13

In order to determine what their parents do to help them in school, question 13 asks *Do your parents encourage you to do well in school?* I then asked students to describe exactly what their parents did.

6. Type of Schooling - Question 16

What kind of school did you attend in Mexico? I asked this question in order to know if students had attended private schools or not. The purpose of this question was to establish students' experiences with academic culture.

7. Attitudes toward Tests - Question 17

This question was asked in order to determine students' attitudes toward high-stakes tests and whether or not the tests raise their anxiety about learning English and about school.

Although many of the interview questions initially called for just a yes or no answer, I followed up with further questions that elicited more detailed information. For example, after asking students whether their parents encourage them to do well in school, I also asked them to

give me specific examples of their parents' behaviors or comments.

Parent Interviews

In order to get a better picture of the students' family situations and reasons for coming to the U.S., I spoke to the parents of some student participants. These interviews provided me with the answers to the kinds of questions that students might not be able to answer themselves. For instance, I asked parents to tell me about their own educational backgrounds, their annual income, the kind of work they do here in the U.S., the kinds of work they did in Mexico, and their involvements in their children's education (see Appendix C for list of parent interview questions). The purpose of these questions was to examine the factors outside of the students that may or may not contribute to their individual success or non-success in a U.S high school.

Academic Achievement Measures

In order to measure the students' language acquisition in academic English, I collected data about the students' overall academic achievement in core classes as well as their achievement in English Language

Development (ELD) and English literature classes specifically. Achievement in all these classes was measured by students' grades, categorized as follows: 3.0 -4.0 = above-average; 2.0-2.99 = average; 1.99 or less = below-average.

I also included students' most recent language proficiency scores and compared them to the number of years they had been in the U.S. in order to measure their progress in ELD. Beginning in September 2001, students were given the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) to measure their overall proficiency level in English. This score is a summary of three scores: Listening and Speaking, Reading, and Writing. Prior to the CELDT, students took the Language Assessment Syntax (LAS) test, which provided a measure of their oral language proficiency only. Although I recognize that students' test scores are limited as measures of language development and that course grades in particular are subject to variation in teachers' evaluation standards, scores do offer a preliminary window into students' academic English achievement. Having a high overall GPA would indicate achievement in English because students have to have a certain level of English skills or academic

literacy skills in order to do well in content courses. Further studies could expand on the present one by addressing students' achievement in English through such measures as proficiency appropriate writing assignments or reading comprehension measures.

Data Analysis

After conducting the surveys and interviews, I categorized students according to their levels of acculturation/social distance and academic achievement (in the next chapter, I explain how acculturation/social distance levels were determined). I then searched for relationships between the degree of social distance and their overall academic achievement, and between the degree of social distance and their grades in English. Drawing on the interviews, I identified common themes in responses among students within each academic achievement level. Finally, I looked in greater depth at interviews of students and parents. The purposes of these case studies were to examine individual variation among the students and to highlight various factors which may contribute to or limit the academic English success of particular Mexican adolescent English learners.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

This chapter presents the results of surveys and interviews of 24 adolescent Mexican immigrant English learners. It begins with a description of the relationship between the students' social distance (as measured by the surveys) and overall academic achievement, and between social distance and achievement in their English classes. This description is followed by a discussion of student and parent interview responses and what they reveal about academic achievement and factors contributing to success in English acquisition (as extracted from the interviews). Next, the chapter incorporates several case studies, which highlight the individual variables contributing to or limiting students'. All student names throughout this thesis have been changed for confidentiality.

Social Distance and Academic Achievement

Table 1 presents results of the survey on social distance and the overall grade point average of each participant. This overall average includes grades in the core subject areas: Social Science, Science, Math and

English, as well as other required and elective courses. The numbers in the far left column represent the number of items to which the student gave negative responses. The lower the number of negative answers, the lower the degree of social distance. As can be seen in Table 1, students with higher GPAs tended to cluster in the lower social distance range on the surveys, whereas those with lower GPAs were spread across high social distance scores. For example, although the students who had above average GPAs ranged in scores from 9 to 27, the majority of the above average students are clustered between scores 9 and 12. On the other hand, more average and below average students (75%) scored from 13-18 than did above average students (42%).

Though Dulay and Pepe did not give specific scores to determine what is high and what is low in terms of social distance, I essentially divided the 31 questions by 3 in order to create three categories, based on John Schumann's concepts: Assimilation, Acculturation, and Preservation. Students who scored from 1-12 were thought to have assimilation to English-speaking American culture; those who scored from 13-22 were thought to have some

Table 1. Correlation Between
Social Distance and Overall Grade Point Average

Number of negative responses on social distance survey	High Overall GPA	3.0 - 4.0	Average 2.0- Overall 2.99 GPA	Low Overall GPA	2.0 & below
1	NA		NA		NA
2	NA		NA		NA
3	NA		NA		NA
4	NA		NA		NA
5	NA		NA		NA
6	NA		NA		NA
7	NA		NA		NA
8	NA		NA		NA
9	3.2, 3.3		NA		NA
10	NA		NA		NA
11	3.67, 3.7		NA		NA
12	3.67, 3.6, 3.3		2.59, 2.6		1.7
13	NA		NA		1.63
14	NA		2.0		1.67
15	3.67		NA		1.61
16	3.3, 3.0		2.75, 2.81		NA
17	3.65		NA		1.47
18	NA		NA		1.53
19	NA		2.5		NA
20	NA		NA		NA
21	NA		NA		NA
22	NA		NA		NA
23	NA		NA		NA
24	NA		NA		NA
25	NA		NA		NA
26	NA		NA		NA
27	3.3		NA		NA
28	NA		NA		NA
29	NA		NA		NA
30	NA		NA		NA
31	NA		NA		NA

acculturation; and those who scored from 23-31 were
thought to have preservation. Table 2 shows the number of

students from each overall academic achievement level in the three categories of social distance.

Table 2. Relationship Between Overall Academic Achievement and Assimilation, Acculturation and Preservation

	Assimilation	Acculturation	Preservation
Above Average Achievement	7	4	1
Average Achievement	2	4	0
Below Average Achievement	1	5	0

As the table shows, the majority of students (7 out of 10) whose surveys indicated assimilation had above-average achievement, while more of those whose surveys indicated acculturation had average to below-average achievement (9 out of 13). Seven of the twelve students who have above-average academic achievement tend to be more assimilated (or at least demonstrate a *desire* to assimilate). Nine of the twelve students whose academic achievement is either average or below average demonstrate some acculturation, but their interviews reveal more signs

of resistance to assimilation, which I will discuss later. Only three of the twelve in the average and below-average achievement groups scored in the assimilation range.

In addition to the somewhat negative relationship between social distance and overall academic achievement, there was also a negative correlation between social distance and grades in English classes. As Table 3 indicates, the students with the greatest social distance tended to have lower grades in English, and those who showed more acculturation and assimilation tended to have higher grades in English. That is, eight of the ten students who scored in the assimilation range on the survey also had As and Bs in their English classes. Nine of the thirteen students who scored in the acculturation range on the survey have Cs and Ds in English. Interestingly, the one student who scored in the preservation range on the survey had an A in his English class, but the interview with this student revealed some valid explanations for this exception. There is, conversely, a student who had an F in English but scored in the assimilation range on the survey. The interview with her revealed certain interesting factors contributing to her poor grade. I will discuss both of these students

later in the chapter. It should be noted that students' grades in English corresponded to their overall academic achievement. All students with above-average overall academic achievement also had an A or a B in English. Likewise, students with average to below-average overall academic achievement also had a C, D or F in English.

Table 3. Correlation Between Social Distance and Grades in English

Grade in English	Assimilation	Acculturation	Preservation
3.6 -4.0 A	6	2	1
3.0 B	2	2	0
2.0 C	1	5	0
1.0 D	0	4	0
0 F	1	0	0

Thus, there appears to be a positive relationship between above average academic achievement in English courses and a sense of assimilation. On the other hand, those who demonstrated some sense of acculturation had average to below average academic achievement and grades in English. It must be noted that 41% of the students who simply did not return the parental consent form (and were thus not included as subjects in the study) were achieving at a below average level academically. While there may be

legitimate reasons for this lack of participation, it is nevertheless an interesting observation. Additionally, 26% of these non-participating students have average academic achievement, and just 3% are above average. If willingness to participate in this study is any indication of motivation or attitude with respect to English, then it is perhaps telling that the majority of those who did not participate are the students with the poorest academic achievement.

In addition to the survey and academic records, the participants' California English Language Development Test (CELDT) scores were studied in relation to the number of years they have been in the U.S. Table 4 shows the number and GPAs of students who scored at a particular level on the CELDT (vertical axis) and who have been in the U.S. for a particular number of years (horizontal axis). Ideally, proficiency in English should improve with every year that students are in the U.S. The table shows that this does not necessarily happen. Except for the first year, progress in English does not necessarily correlate to the number of years students have been in the country. In fact, progress seems to fall behind as early as the second year of residence in the U.S.

Table 4. Relationship Between Number of Years in United States and Proficiency Level in English as Measured by the California English Language Development Test

Years in United States	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Beginning	n=5 1.67 3.67 3.3 3.6 3.3	N=3 2.5 1.53 3.3					
Beginning Intermediate		N=1 3.3	N=3 2.0 2.59 2.75				
Intermediate			N=2 3.67 3.67	N=1 1.47	N=1 2.81		
Early-Advanced					N=3 1.63 1.7 3.65		
Advanced							N=1 3.7

The five students who entered the U.S. one year earlier are indeed at the beginning level of proficiency, as might be expected. However, of the four students who entered the U.S. two years earlier, only one is at the next level

of proficiency, which is beginning-intermediate. Of the five students who entered the U.S. three years earlier, two are at the third, or intermediate, level of proficiency. The student who entered the U.S. four years earlier is actually at the intermediate level, not the early-advanced level of proficiency. And of the four students who entered the U.S. five years earlier, three are at the early-advanced level and one is at the intermediate level rather than the advanced level. Four students' CELDT scores were unavailable, which means they may not have been tested.

One reason some students may not be advancing in proficiency in accordance with the number of years they have lived in the U.S. is that reading and writing proficiency require a more advanced grasp of academic language skills, which as research has demonstrated (Collier, 1995; Cummins, 1979; Diaz-Rico & Weed, 1995), takes approximately 6-7 years on average. Not counting the students who have been in the U.S. for one year, those students (n=4) whose proficiency level in English correlates to the number of years they have been in the U.S. also had above average academic achievement. Most of the students whose proficiency level in English does not

correlate with their years of residence in the U.S. have average to below average academic achievement. It is also interesting to note that all of the students whose proficiency level correlates to the number of years they have been in the U.S. scored in the assimilation range of assimilation, while the others mostly scored in the acculturation range. This supports the idea that social distance does, indeed, affect the acquisition of English.

Therefore, my analysis of the surveys and students' overall GPA and grades in English suggests that the more these students attempt or desire to assimilate to English-speaking American mainstream culture, the higher their level of academic achievement and success in English. Additionally, students whose proficiency levels seem to be advancing with each year they reside in the U.S. demonstrate a greater tendency or desire to assimilate.

Interviews

The survey provided only a general indication of each participant's degree of assimilation or acculturation, and it did not allow for a more extensive understanding of various factors linked with social distance and achievement in English proficiency and overall academics.

The interviews with students and parents, however, offered a more in-depth look at patterns characteristic of each achievement group. Specifically, the interviews revealed how students' friendships, media behavior, language usage, motivation, perceptions of prejudice and discrimination, parental involvement and educational background reflect connections and disconnections with English language and American culture. In the following sections, I first summarize the patterns of each achievement group with respect to these themes. I then discuss in greater detail the interviews with five students in order to highlight individual variation in the factors influencing their social distance and overall academic achievement.

Friendships

While the students with above average achievement are by no means totally assimilated into mainstream American culture, their interview responses suggest that they are more acculturated than some of the other students. The most obvious trait noted among these students was a conscious effort to surround themselves with more English through their social acquaintances. For example:

- (1) Yes, I have my friends in band.

(2) I talk to some girls from my class. They're nice.

Overall, it appears that students with the highest academic achievement have at least some friends who speak English as their primary or native language, whereas those with the poorest academic achievement only have friends who speak Spanish only. A few high achieving students did not actually have non-Latino friends, but they said they would like to if it were not for the language barrier or feelings of inadequacy, as seen in the following comments:

(3) I don't understand them well.

(4) Sometimes I'm embarrassed because I don't know the words well..

(5) I've tried, but [in basketball] the coach and the other girls didn't understand me and my sister. They treated me poorly.

Students whose academic achievement was average also tended to have more acquaintances from the target language group than did the lower achievement group. One girl, for example, is dating a non-Latino who speaks very little Spanish, and she said:

(6) I like it because he helps me to speak more English.

Most of the low achieving participants do not socialize with or have non-Spanish speaking (non-Latino) friends. These students expressed less desire to have non-Latino friends as their comments indicate:

(7) No, [I do not have English speaking friends] because when I try to say something to them, I don't know how to express myself.

(8) It's more difficult to communicate.

(9) We don't understand each other.

(10) They seem different. I just connect more with Mexicans.

(11) I'm shy to talk to them in a long conversation. There's nothing to talk about.

Media Behaviors

Nearly every one of the high achieving students watches television and/or listens to the radio in English at least half of the time. At least half of these students do so in an effort to improve their English and learn more about American mainstream culture. One student, for example, said:

(12) To keep my Hispanic culture, I watch television in Spanish. To keep learning American culture, I watch it in English.

The same is true for the students with average academic achievement, though they tended to favor Spanish-language media. The students with low academic achievement generally preferred to watch Spanish television and listen to the radio in Spanish. In fact, one of these students likes to watch the Spanish "novellas" (soap operas), but her sister, who has average academic achievement, prefers the English sitcoms. One telling comment from a student with low achievement was:

(13) I don't understand anything in English.

Language Usage

An interesting finding in my study is that all students across the three achievement groups said they use Spanish much more than they do English. Also, the only students who reported making any effort to use English with classmates, teachers or friends are those who demonstrate the highest academic achievement. In fact, only these students said it would be okay for me to interview them in English, although I did indeed use Spanish to ensure their understanding and put them at ease during this interview.

When asked why they were not using more English, almost all students indicated that they felt little immediate need for it. For example, some of the comments were:

(14) All of my friends speak Spanish, so we only speak Spanish to each other.

(15) Most of my friends speak Spanish. It's easier for us to communicate in our first language.

It is understandably very easy for these students to use Spanish much more frequently than English given the high percentage of Spanish-speaking Latinos in California, and I will discuss this further in the next chapter.

Some of the students said that the only time they use English is when they have to, such as when speaking to their teachers or other adults at the school:

(16) I try to ask for help [in English] if I don't understand something.

(17) Yes, [my teachers] correct me.

It may be concluded, therefore, that these adolescent English learners view English as the language of others, particularly of authority figures.

Motivation

The students who had the highest academic achievement suggested having a greater degree of instrumental motivation in their interviews than the students with the lowest academic achievement. That is, these students seemed to have a clearer understanding of the benefits of learning English well, and they expressed clearer and more specific goals for their future. Additionally, they more frequently expressed a desire to connect with English-speakers, citing reasons such as:

(18) To be able to communicate with people.

(19) To get to know more people.

(20) English is the universal language.

These comments suggest a greater degree of integrative motivation and less social distance with respect to English and American culture.

Six students had less than a C average in overall academic achievement, and five students had grades in English of less than C (except for one, the same six students with below average overall GPA are the same students with below average scores in English). When asked about their desires to go on to college (to establish instrumental motivation), only one of these

students expressed any concrete plans for the future that required English. All said that they want to go to college, but when asked about specific interests, only one could articulate an actual goal. She said she wanted to be an actress or a singer, however, which doesn't necessarily require a college degree.

Two students who had some of the highest social distance scores on the survey (scores were 17 and 18) also expressed in their interviews the greatest lack of motivation (both instrumental and integrative) for learning English or interest in school. Neither considers herself a very good student; however they both feel they could do better if they wanted to. Shrugging their shoulders, neither could articulate their reasons for not actually doing better in their classes. Their ELD teacher notices a serious lack of effort, but he does not understand what causes it. Unfortunately, these interviews were unsuccessful in pinpointing any specific causes for their lack of effort, motivation, and success in English and academics.

Prejudice and Discrimination

The majority of the students interviewed assured me that they had never felt or experienced any kind of

prejudice or racism directed toward them. There were six students, however, who shared very sad stories of discrimination, which may have led them to feel distant from the American society in which they are living. Of these, only two were in the high achievement category. The other four were in the low achievement category (these students made up the majority of the six students at this achievement level).

One girl said she has had discrimination problems

(21) con las cholas (with the cholas)

in that they want to fight with her, and she doesn't know why. She reports that she does not even know them.

"Cholas" is considered a derogatory term that refers to Chicanas who resist acculturation and often exhibit deviant behavior such as gang affiliation. These students often do not speak fluent Spanish, and there is a definite distinction between immigrant English learners and "cholas" on campus, even though the "cholas" are by no means a mainstream group. Another girl said that her first year was difficult:

(22) Everything was so different and the [Americans] were different.

Finally, a third girl remembers her family being humiliated at Wal-Mart when her father was falsely accused of stealing merchandise. Even though it was proven that he and the other family members stole nothing, she recalls feeling very bad:

(23) I knew it was because we were Mexican.

Parental Involvement

Based on the interviews with students as well as some of the parents, I was able to see a trend that is perhaps relevant to all secondary students, not just immigrant English learners from Mexico: the degree to which parents are actively involved in their children's academic lives.

Not surprisingly, students with the highest academic achievement have very involved parents who push their children to do well in school more often than do students with lower academic achievement. These parents actively involved themselves in their children's education by ensuring they completed homework assignments prior to socializing with friends. One parent, for example, said:

(24) She knows she has to do her homework as soon as she gets home. And I make sure to see she is doing it.

Although they are often unable to help academically, they do offer a great deal of encouragement and support. One parent who speaks very little English commented:

(25) I can't help her too much because of my poor English, but I ask her to tell me what she's learning. My younger son, he helps me to learn English better. I learn from him.

By asking her children about their work, this parent demonstrates her own desire to learn, and she teaches them the value of education.

On the other hand, the parents of students with the lowest academic achievement were either absent from home altogether or somewhat unaware of their children's assignments and academic situation. In some cases, the parents just do not know how to help their children succeed. Many of these parents do not participate in their children's academic lives because they feel that they are unable to do so. The parent of two students who are both well below average (one is at risk of not graduating) admits that his ignorance of his children's school lives is a big problem:

(26) I ask them about their homework, and they tell me that they are finished or that they don't have

any. What am I supposed to say? Then I get the report card, and they are getting Ds and Fs. Only when I talk to their teachers do they do their work, but then it happens again.

Additionally, these parents place much more importance on their children's responsibilities for younger siblings and for helping with household duties and responsibilities, which often interferes with school-related activities such as homework and after-school tutoring. One parent, for example, explained why her child cannot stay after school to get the help she needs:

(27) She has to help me take care of her brothers and sisters when I go to work.

This situation is not uncommon in poor families of all ethnic backgrounds, but it is particularly difficult for those trying to acquire a second language because they really need more time to acquire academic literacy in English.

I was unable to get a sense of whether parental involvement was related to their own sense of social distance, but this may be an area worth investigating for future research.

Educational Background

Another factor that may be related to success in second language acquisition for adolescents is type of schooling and parental educational attainment. Specifically, students who attended a private school in Mexico may have an advantage over those who attended public schools. Additionally, students whose parents completed high school in Mexico may also have an advantage over students whose parents have little or no formal schooling. While this may not be much of a surprise, as the same can be said for all students, it is pertinent to this study because my focus is on the needs of immigrant secondary students from Mexico, who more often may lack formal schooling in their first language compared to other ethnic groups.

Of the twelve students who had above-average academic achievement, five reported attending private schools in Mexico. According to one student who attended two years of public school:

(28) Public schools in Mexico only teach the minimum. Private schools expect more of students, so they are much more challenging.

This group of students also had at least one parent who had completed "segundaria," which ends in ninth grade. After ninth grade, students must pay for school, which prohibits many from continuing their education. Five of these twelve students had one or both parents who had completed high school and had some kind of career training or university education.

Of the students whose academic achievement is below average, none attended private schools. Additionally, their parents have very little formal education. Most of these parents either did not attend school, or completed sixth grade or less. One student actually moved back and forth between Mexico and the U.S., which may have had a very negative impact on her overall literacy skills in both English and Spanish. She attended public school in Mexico until second grade, then moved to Los Angeles for two years before returning to Mexico at the end of fourth grade. It should be noted that in the third and fourth grade, daily phonics instruction is not as extensive as in the earlier grades, so her literacy skills and language development in English were only beginning to develop when she had to leave again for Mexico. She returned to the U.S. again in the seventh grade, and although she has now

been in the U.S. for over four years, she is still below average in English and in overall academic achievement.

Achievement Group Profiles

In this analysis of the student and parent interviews, certain patterns emerge in the degree of social distance students in each achievement groups express, as well as in other factors influencing their academic success. In this section, I offer summary profiles of each achievement group.

Above-Average Achievement

These high achieving students generally seem to have a much more positive attitude toward American culture and English than do other students. They tend to have at least a few English-speaking, non-Latino friends, and they make an effort to use English as often as possible. They tend to watch television and listen to the radio in English, and they generally report few or no negative perceptions of English-speaking Americans and American culture (e.g., they did not report experiencing discrimination in the U.S.). Most have parents who are extremely involved in or supportive of their academic lives, and most have at least one parent who has completed

high school or beyond. Some of these students also have had private schooling.

Average Achievement

The average achieving students also demonstrate generally positive attitudes towards American culture and English, though they appear to be more hesitant in using the English language. This group of students mirrors its above average counterparts in all areas except language usage. All of these students reported making little or no effort to speak English, and most felt they could not speak it well. Almost all average students expressed feeling somewhat uncomfortable speaking to students who did not speak Spanish.

Below-Average Achievement

This group of students generally appeared to harbor some negativity toward or hesitation about American culture and English. The students in this group reported having no friendships with non-Latino, non-Spanish-speakers because they perceive greater differences between English-speaking Americans and Spanish-speaking Mexicans. They prefer to watch television and listen to music in Spanish, and they reported using Spanish in their everyday interactions. Students in this group have little or no

integrative motivation to learn English, and none could describe any clear instrumental motivation. More students in this group expressed having experienced or perceived some discrimination and/or prejudice, and many of them expressed difficulty in adjusting to life in the U.S. The parents of this group have less formal schooling than the parents of the above average and average students, and their involvement in their children's education is minimal.

Case Studies

Although summary profiles can be made for each achievement group as a whole, they do not capture the individual circumstances affecting students' success in academic English and overall achievement in their courses. I therefore took a closer look at a few students in order to explain some of the variables impacting them. Because so many individual factors vary from student to student, I felt it was necessary to provide information about some of the students whose personal stories stood out. Some of these cases are exceptions to the overall relationship between social distance and achievement found in the subjects as a whole, and others are powerful examples of

the particular significant factors affecting achievement in second language acquisition for secondary English learners. The first two students lack success in English and overall achievement, but their survey scores suggested that they were assimilated. The next two students are just the opposite. They are very successful in English and overall achievement, but their survey scores suggest that they are acculturated. The last student is the one who has been in the United States the longest.

Carolina

Carolina is a below-average achieving student whose overall grade point average is just under a C- (1.63). On the CELDT, she scored at the early-advanced level of proficiency, which is one level below what she should be. Her most recent SAT 9 scores were low (Reading - 8, Math - 11, and Language - 24). Her grades in high school have been mostly Cs, Ds, and Fs, although she did manage to improve somewhat during her junior and senior years, when she was finally placed in the appropriate SDAIE classes. She also received Ds in the first three semesters of her Spanish for Spanish Speakers classes, which suggests that her literacy skills in Spanish may be underdeveloped. In

addition, she has a rather poor attendance record, which has probably contributed to her below average achievement.

Interestingly, her low achievement does not appear to be linked to a lack of parental interest as was found in the student/parent interviews as a whole. Her parents made a sincere effort to be involved in her education. Her father bought her a computer when she was in tenth grade, and he regularly checked her folder to see what work she had to do. Both her parents asked her about her work on a daily basis to make sure she was doing what she was supposed to. They are strict with her in terms of her socializing with friends and her boyfriend. If anything, Carolina thinks they are a bit too strict with her.

There are several factors, however, that may have influenced her lack of success in school, including her motivation to learn English. She is a self-described "average" student. She says she wants to go to college, but her motivation is very different than that of Karen and Selma, whose case studies are presented below. Carolina's motivation is independence. She explains, "I don't want to depend on anyone. I want to support myself." As far as learning English is concerned, Carolina thinks it is definitely better to be bilingual

because "you get more money." Her motivation can be seen as instrumental, but these goals in particular are not articulated as specific to a career. They are much more general, and somewhat contradictory to her actions, which are presented at the end of this case study.

In response to why her grades are so low, she said, "I try to do my best, but there is the laziness." When asked where she thought the laziness came from, she responded, "In seventh and eighth grade, I had perfect scores. Then in high school, I didn't have very good friends. You know, I was hanging out with the wrong crew. Most of those friends were born here, though."

As suggested by her comment, Carolina's motivation may be related to her social networks and cultural identity. After five years in the U.S., Carolina demonstrates a greater degree of social distance by her lack of friendships with non-Latino, English-speaking Americans. Carolina does not have any non-Spanish speaking friends. She believes there is "nothing to talk about" and that she is "shy to talk to them in a long conversation." Additionally, she does not like getting involved in school activities. I asked her if she ever attends school dances, or if she went to the Prom, and she

said, "No, they don't play any Spanish music - no merengue or anything. The prom is just a waste of money."

Carolina does, however, listen to the radio and watch television in both English and Spanish, although she prefers Spanish and tends to use that more because "it is my native language, and that's what I feel more comfortable with."

Carolina's motivation and achievement may have also been somewhat tainted by perceptions of discrimination in her particular experiences in the U.S. While the answers on her survey suggest that she is highly acculturated (her score was 13), her interview responses indicate that Carolina harbors some very negative feelings towards mainstream, English-speaking Americans and American culture. During her interview, Carolina shared some very disturbing experiences that have contributed to some of the negativity she feels. The two experiences that stand out most to her involve high school staff members who made her "feel stupid." While one can argue that these instances were not intentionally malicious, the fact remains that Carolina's perception of the situation was negative and the experiences have had a substantial effect on her.

Carolina entered the U.S. in the seventh grade. As she had done in Mexico, Carolina managed to do well academically during her first two years at the middle school while she was learning English. She credits good bilingual tutors and ELD teachers who helped her adjust. However, when she got to high school, things changed dramatically. Her guidance coordinator at the time, who is no longer at the school, did not enroll her in the proper ELD and SDAIE classes, so Carolina's grades plummeted. She found herself struggling to comprehend the higher-level core content in English, and not having the bilingual assistance or support only made her academic situation worse.

Although she tried to ask for help and explain her needs to her guidance coordinator, he did not change her schedule. In fact, it was not until the following year that she finally got the help she needed, but then she was also placed in a class that did not count towards graduation. When asked why she did not go to the vice principal, or why her parents did not intervene, she simply shrugged her shoulders and said she did not know what to do. Her parents tried once to talk to the coordinator, but he did not speak Spanish. Carolina

recalls that her parents were very embarrassed and never went to the school again.

Another experience she recounted also may have contributed to her poor achievement. At the time of this interview, Carolina was a senior. She explained that when she met with her current counselor at the beginning of the year, he asked her about her future plans. When Carolina expressed her desire to become a kindergarten teacher, he laughed and said, "What's plan B?" Flustered, Carolina said she also thought about studying cosmetology, which her counselor said was "more like it."

When I asked her how she felt about that conversation with her counselor, she said, gesturing with her thumb and forefinger, "I felt like this small. I mean I couldn't believe that he said that. He is supposed to be helping me, but if he doesn't think I can do it, then how am I supposed to feel? I know I can do it. Maybe not right now, but someday I can transfer to a university."

Carolina did indeed graduate. She has a very strong will, and she is self-motivated enough to keep her head above water. Although she says she wants to continue her education, her immediate plans are to get married.

Carolina's story highlights some of the particular factors contributing to her lack of motivation, social distance and below average academic achievement. Specifically, the friends she initially made in high school were a negative influence on her academics, and her struggle with the high school system caused her to lose some of her faith in the American dream and the American people. Her experiences helped to create greater social distance and weaken whatever motivation to succeed in English that she might have had when she first entered the U.S.

Esmeralda

Esmeralda is a low-achieving student. However, as mentioned earlier, she is an exception to the overall pattern in this study in that she has relatively low social distance with respect to English and American culture. Her score on the survey was a 12, placing her just on the cusp of assimilation. Though she has been in the U.S. for four years, her overall academic achievement, however, is a 1.72, and her grades in English are a C in ELD and an F in SDAIE English 9. On the SAT 9, Esmeralda scored 5 in Reading, 11 in Language, and 38 in Math, which are all below average scores. On the CELDT, she scored at

the early-advanced level of proficiency, which is one level below where she ideally should be in that she has been in the U.S. a total of seven years.

Despite her movement toward assimilation at least in some areas, there are a number of factors that may be affecting her academic achievement. One possible reason for her poor performance is the fact that her literacy skills in both English and Spanish were not fully developed in the early years of her schooling. As I mentioned earlier in the chapter under educational background, Esmeralda is the student who went back and forth between Mexico and the U.S. between second and seventh grade. She does not think she is a very good student and admits that she does not try her hardest to do well. When asked why she does not try harder, she explained, "Sometimes I don't understand the work. My geometry teacher doesn't explain well, so I get confused."

Esmeralda's interview reveals that she has neither instrumental nor integrative motivation for learning academic English. She does recognize the need for learning English and believes that "knowing two languages can get a better job." Her goal, however, is to become an actress or a singer. Although she says she would like to

go to college, there is no definite connection between education or learning English and her goal of becoming an entertainer. She has not taken a choir or drama class, though that may be due to the fact that she is completing her Foreign Language and Physical Education requirements, which is normal for 9th and 10th graders.

Another factor may be language use. Despite her recognizing the need for learning English, she rarely uses the language. Spanish is the language she uses more often. In fact, she preferred to speak to me in Spanish during her interview. When explaining why she does not feel comfortable speaking to people who do not speak any Spanish, she says, "Because when I want to tell them something, I don't know how to express it." All of her friends are Mexican Spanish-speakers, and she says that these friendships are what make her feel comfortable at school. She reports that she has not made an effort to make friends with English-only speaking non-Latinos. Esmeralda makes an effort to watch television in English, but she listens to the radio in Spanish because she prefers "la musica Mexicana" (Mexican music).

With regard to parental involvement, the interview with Esmeralda and her father was a bit contradictory.

Though Esmeralda says that her parents encourage her to do well in school, she also reports having to take care of her younger siblings when she gets home from school. Her father admits to having trouble helping his children with school, saying, "This is a serious problem I have. They always say they don't have homework or they already finished." He wants his children to learn English, but it is difficult for him to involve himself in their education because he works so much. When asked what he thought about his children having to pass the High School Exit Exam to graduate, he said, "I don't know anything about that exam."

Esmeralda appears to perceive a certain amount of prejudice and discrimination here in the U.S.. When asked if she feels that non-Hispanic, English-speaking Americans are nice to her, Esmeralda hesitated. The following is a translation of her response:

Well, some are yes. There are some who I feel do not treat me very well. Really, it seems to me that no - no, they are not very nice to me.

Her response prompted me to delve deeper into the reasons for this negative perception, so I asked her to explain her feelings. She went on to describe a

humiliating experience, which I discussed earlier in the chapter under Prejudice and Discrimination, in which her father was wrongly accused of stealing merchandise at a Wal-Mart. She strongly believes that her family was targeted because they are Mexican, and she does not appear to have really recovered from that experience.

Despite her somewhat low social distance toward English and American culture, Esmeralda's family life, interrupted schooling in Mexico and the U.S., and perceptions of prejudice and discrimination seem to be important factors influencing her poor achievement in English and in overall academics. She has just two more years before graduation, and because she is in the class of 2004, she is required to pass the High School Exit Exam in order to graduate. She said, "I wish I didn't have to take these tests. They seem very difficult. I have to study more so I can pass." Esmeralda's scores on the high school exit exam were 336 in Math and 347 in English the first time she took the test. 350 is a passing score, and there were a number of English-only students who did not score as high as Esmeralda.

This year, Esmeralda did not take the High School Exit Exam, despite a great effort on the part of school administrators and teachers to encourage attendance and performance. When asked why she did not take the test, Esmeralda stated that she did not know.

Perhaps Esmeralda is actually more capable in language than her grades and SAT 9 scores reveal, and if that is the case, then there would be a positive relationship between her language abilities and her sense of assimilation. However, her interview suggested that she is not actively trying to achieve better in her classes, and that may have much to do with her lack of a realistic goal, her negative experiences in the U.S., her choice of friends, and her use of language. Additionally, the pressures of standardized tests may be having a negative impact on her learning. Hopefully, Esmeralda will find a way to turn things around so that she can have better success in school.

Karen

Though Karen's survey reveals that she is acculturated rather than highly assimilated (her score was

16), she actually has had a great deal of success in high school. Her overall GPA is a 3.65 and she got an A in English. On the CELDT, she scored at the early-advanced level of proficiency, which is one level below what she should be. Her Math and Language scores on the SAT 9 were 66 and 42, respectively, which are average scores compared to English-only students. She did not take the Reading portion of the SAT 9; however, her grades in English over the past four years indicate that she is a good reader and writer. Her name was submitted for re-designation to Fluent English Proficiency status, but the district felt she was ineligible. She has never gotten less than a C in any of her classes, but because she was placed in Sheltered (SDAIE) classes throughout her high school years, she is not eligible for UC/CSU admission (The UC/CSU system only accepts one sheltered class). She plans to attend a community college for two years, improve her English skills, and transfer to a four-year university. Karen graduated in 2002 with a 3.65 grade point average.

Karen's educational background in Mexico helped lay the foundation for her transition to school in the U.S. Karen came to the U.S. at the end of the seventh grade.

She recalls that time as being very "difficult," but like Carolina, she found the staff at the middle school to be extremely helpful and supportive. Because she attended private school from kindergarten to seventh grade, Karen was already very literate in Spanish. She excelled in school that first year and continued that success in eighth grade.

Her achievement in middle school and her educational background probably helped her overcome some obstacles she encountered in high school. She said, "I feel I got stuck with certain stereotypes. I wanted to advance more quickly, but because I was an LEP student, my counselor forced me to take an ESL class. I think I lost some confidence." Because she saw herself as a good student, however, she did her best to keep up her grades even though she did not want to be in the ESL class.

An important factor contributing to Karen's success is motivation. Karen is highly self-motivated. She has always wanted to go to college, and her goal is to eventually become a nurse or a doctor. It is this very specific instrumental motivation that helped her overcome some of the obstacles she encountered in high school. One of her biggest frustrations was watching so many of her

peers drop out of school. She is saddened when she recalls some of the students who had arrived in the U.S. at the same time she did and are no longer around. "They just dropped out. Giving up ... it's sad!" Karen, on the other hand, has a fighting spirit. She wants very much to "get ahead" in life, and she believes that a solid education is the key to a successful future.

Karen credits her parents for being a big part of her success. Her father finished "prepa" (college preparatory high school) and her mother has her "carrera" (specialized training). "They make sure I do my work, and they are very strict with me. I'm glad because I have seen many of my friends who just do whatever they want and their parents don't even care or they don't understand." She is well aware of the importance of parental involvement, and she is extremely respectful of her parents and other adults in her life. Karen has never been had a discipline problem.

While the majority of her friends are Spanish speaking Latinas and Latinos, she does have a few non-Latino, English-only acquaintances. She explains that there is definitely a language barrier and a huge difference between Mexicans and non-Latino Americans in

terms of ideologies. She does, however, make a conscious effort to surround herself with students who take school seriously, and some of these include native English speakers. She also tries to watch television and listen to the radio in English as often as possible because she believes it will help her learn English better.

Though Karen's survey and interview reveal some social distance, she possesses certain personality traits and environmental supports that have contributed to her overall success in school and with academic English. She is a very determined student who, along with her parents, highly values education. Her experience in private school in Mexico helped her develop her academic and critical literacy skills in Spanish, which she transferred to English quite well, and she associates with serious students, who include native English speakers. She is well aware of her limitations in academic English, but she plans to continue developing her language skills as she pursues a college degree.

Fernando

Fernando's responses on the survey suggests that he has a great degree of social distance; in fact, his score of 27 would place him in the preservation range. His

overall GPA, however, is a 3.3, and he has an A in English. This is his first year in the U.S., and he is in the eleventh grade. He did not take the SAT '9, so there are no scores available for him. According to his scores on the CELDT, he is at the Beginning level of proficiency. The only area where Fernando seems to have any trouble is in SDAIE Algebra 1, for which he earned a D. He earned a B in Advanced Placement Spanish Language, which suggests he is highly literate in Spanish.

An important factor contributing to Fernando's success in school is motivation. His instrumental motivation is extremely high, as he has very specific plans to become a mechanical engineer. He hopes to learn more English and perhaps study at an American university. Fernando is not an immigrant like the other students of this study. He is here specifically for the purpose of learning English, which suggests that he is more like an international student. He does hope to return to Mexico someday, which would explain why his degree of social distance is so high.

Another factor for his success in school may be his exposure to English and his use of the language. He lives with his uncle's family, who all are fluent English

speakers. He says they try to speak English at home as often as they can, except when he really can't understand something. Homeowners, they live in a very middle-class neighborhood where the homes are worth about \$200,000. Although it is a fairly culturally diverse neighborhood, most of the neighbors speak only English. The family watches television in English, so Fernando does the same. He does listen to the radio in Spanish, however, because he prefers that music.

At school, he admits that he has not made any English-speaking friends, but he is quick to explain that it was a combination of being a little shy and not feeling confident in his language skills. He does say that he will definitely try to do so this year, his senior year. Nevertheless, he does speak English to his teachers, to the cafeteria staff when ordering his lunch, and to the office staff when he needs something. Fernando is surrounded by English language, and he makes a conscious effort to use the language as often as possible.

His uncle's involvement in his schooling may be another factor in his success. When Fernando gets home from school, he is expected to do his homework. During dinner, his uncle asks about what he and his cousin are

learning in school. Fernando's cousin, who is in the eighth grade, is at the top of her class. Fernando's parents are also involved and supportive of his academic endeavors, as they agreed to let him come to the U.S. for the purpose of improving his English skills. Their educational background and values have also contributed to Fernando's success.

Fernando's parents are highly educated and so is Fernando. They both have university degrees. His father is an engineer and his mother is a secretary. Fernando attended a private school in Mexico, where he completed tenth grade before coming to the U.S. Here, he earned a B in the challenging AP Spanish Language class. He had probably already developed some critical literacy skills in Spanish, which made it easier for him to transfer those skills to English.

Because Fernando is uncertain about his plans to stay in the U.S., he may not be completely ready to embrace mainstream, English-speaking American culture. However, he has never experienced any kind of prejudice or discrimination. He explained, "At first I thought that I might feel this from Americans, but no, I did not. People are very nice to me." He has a very positive attitude

toward the U.S. His responses on the survey may simply be, understandably, an indication of his allegiance to Mexico.

Selma

Selma has achieved A's and B's throughout high school. She also scored in the assimilation range of the survey. Her score on the CELDT indicates that she is at the advanced level of proficiency. Though she was not formally re-designated to Fluent English Proficient (FEP) status, she nevertheless opted to take mainstream classes, including English, rather than SDAIE classes. She also has taken rigorous courses, including an Advanced Placement class, for which she received her only C. Her SAT 9 math score is just above average, though her Language and Reading scores are just below average. She holds a 3.7 overall grade point average and wants desperately to go to college and become a lawyer. Her academic success is an interesting and distressing case to study because unfortunately, her dreams are threatened by something that is not her fault - she is here illegally.

Selma feels she "did everything right". She learned the language quickly, excelled in school, got involved in extra-curricular activities such as AFJROTC and the award-

winning marching band, and made many non-Latino, English-speaking friends. In response to what language she prefers when watching television and listening to the radio, she explains, "I use both languages. I watch the Spanish programs with my mom and listen to Spanish music to retain my Mexican heritage, but I mostly watch T.V. in English and listen to American music because I want to get better in English." If ever there were an example of an immigrant who acculturated rapidly and successfully, it is Selma. She not only acculturated into the larger mainstream American culture by making friends with non-Latino, English-speaking Americans, but she also adapted to the academic culture of American schools and tried to adopt the values of the middle class by joining the band, learning to play an instrument, and making school her top priority. Although her six-member family's annual income is roughly \$12,000, she does not consider herself poor. "I'm somewhere in between," the confident girl explains.

Though she is optimistic and positive about her family's financial situation, she admits that life is not always easy. She describes the quality of her life in Mexico as somewhat better in that her family owned their home. "Here we rent a small house." Actually, Selma

shares a small, one bedroom apartment with her parents and her three younger sisters. Nevertheless, she says that her father decided to move to the U.S. because, growing flowers, he could no longer sell enough to make a living. Here, he always has work.

When asked about her success, she explained that seeing her mother and the life she led motivated her to strive for something better. She said that her mother only completed fifth grade, so she understands the value of an education. Her father did complete high school in Mexico, and although he is not as involved in Selma's education as she would like him to be, he has always pushed his daughters to do well in school. It is an expectation in her family.

Selma's case is rather heartbreaking. Her father brought his family to this country on a temporary visa when Selma was in the fifth grade. As it stands, the family is currently in this country without proper documentation. Selma, however, was unaware of this situation until just three years ago, but her determination in school never wavered. She continued to do her best with the hopes that she might be able to get a scholarship to go to college. Her naiveté, in this case,

served her well in that she could not be discouraged. In her senior year, she learned that, because she is not a legal resident, she is not eligible to attend an American university unless she has a student visa. Even then, she would not be able to afford the tuition of even a state school. In discussing her feelings about this situation, she recalls an assignment in her senior English class, in which students were required to fill out college applications.

"I filled out everything, but I don't have a social security number, so I had to leave the application incomplete. Some students were goofing around and not doing their work, and I felt so angry inside. I wanted to yell at them, 'What's wrong with you? You are throwing away your opportunity! I WISH I could trade places with you because I would not waste my opportunity.' I don't have that freedom [to go to college], and it's not even my fault."

As it stands, Selma has two choices: 1) return to Mexico to continue her education, or 2) return to Mexico temporarily to apply for a student visa, then return to the U.S. to complete her studies. Although the first

choice seems logical, it is actually easier said than done. Selma has not been to Mexico since she was ten years old, and she does not know any of her relatives there. To return to Mexico would be tantamount to going to a *foreign* country. More than likely, Selma would be successful because she is a smart and capable young woman, but her opportunities would be extremely limited. The second choice, which she prefers for obvious reasons, is much more of a challenge. If she is granted a student visa, which is much more difficult in the aftermath of September 11, she still faces the problem of paying for her education. Without a job, she cannot support herself. With her future in question, Selma graduated this year with her head held high and her heart filled with very American dreams.

Summary

The results of the study suggest clear relationships among social distance, integrative motivation, academic achievement, and progress in English language proficiency for adolescent English learners. Additionally, other factors that contribute to students' success in English language acquisition emerged in this study.

The analysis of students' surveys and grades indicated a positive relationship between social distance and academic achievement in English and other courses. In general, a number of students with above average achievement scored in the assimilation range of social distance. Also a number of students with average or below average achievement scored in the acculturation range. However, several students showed a negative correlation between social distance and academic achievement, and the interviews provided a better understanding of these exceptional cases.

The interviews with students and parents revealed general characteristics among the students at above average, average, and below average levels of academic achievement. In general, students with above average achievement tended to have friendships, language use patterns, parental support, motivation and other factors that reflected a movement toward assimilation or acculturation and positively influenced their achievement in English and other courses. Most students with above average achievement had English-speaking friends and very involved parents who had acquired more education than other students' parents in this study. These students

tended to make a greater effort to use English as often as possible, and they reported generally more positive attitudes toward English and American culture. Students with average academic achievement had similar characteristics, but there were some characteristics that more negatively influenced achievement. Most students with average achievement had fewer English-speaking friends and made less of an effort to use English. The students with below average achievement tended to have many characteristics that reflected greater social distance from English-speaking, academic culture and negatively influenced their success in English. Almost all students with below-average achievement had no English-speaking friends, and their parents were very uninvolved with their education and lacked education themselves. These students also had more negative attitudes toward and experiences in English-speaking, mainstream American culture.

Still there was some individual variation that needed to be investigated further, and the five case studies helped to highlight particular factors that were critical in enhancing or limiting students' success in English. Personality traits such as determination, optimism, and

strength of spirit seemed to have great influence on individual success, as did a high regard for education. On the other hand, lack of parental involvement, lack of motivation, and perceptions of prejudice seemed to negatively affect students' success in English and other courses.

Therefore, though social distance is one of the factors affecting second language acquisition in adolescent Mexican immigrant English learners, other factors also contribute to their success or lack of success in acquiring English. In the next chapter, I will discuss the implications of these findings and the need for further research.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

As mentioned in the previous chapter, some correlation appears among social distance, motivation, academic achievement and progress in English language proficiency for adolescent English learners.

Additionally, other factors emerged in this study that contribute to success in English language acquisition, particularly for adolescent Mexican immigrants.

In this chapter, I will discuss the implications of these findings and make some suggestions for pedagogy. I will also discuss the need for further research that may help to clarify the different needs of adolescent English learners in general.

Implications of Findings

Social Distance, Integrative Motivation and Friendships

The results of this study suggest that, to some extent, secondary students who make an effort to assimilate to American mainstream culture have a better chance of excelling in English and in school. Those who make little or no effort appear to have more difficulty acquiring the academic English that would enable them to

succeed overall academically. Perhaps one explanation for this phenomenon is that, as Peregoy and Boyle (2001) explain, secondary students' process of L2 acquisition is affected by "the complex interplay of socio-cultural, cognitive, and personality factors" (p.49).

The fact that nearly every student whose academic achievement and grade in English was below average had no English-speaking, non-Latino friends is a finding that has powerful implications. Without English-speaking friends, there is virtually no need and, therefore, little opportunity for students to use English socially. Probably the greatest challenge for Mexican adolescent English learners in California is the ease with which they can retain their own culture and language without having to integrate into the target language culture and community. The increasingly growing population of Spanish-speaking people in California has made it a bilingual state, so the need to learn English for survival in the U.S. is not that great. Scarcella (1996) explains that peers are a very important factor in language development. In fact, she says that "most research indicates that peer influence is strongest in children ages nine to 18" (p. 138).

Anxiety about their own abilities in English may be one reason why students do not seek out friendships with non-Spanish speakers. My own language experiences in Spain and Guinea-Bissau, West Africa, are similar to those of these students: When I went to Madrid during my third year in college as part of a six-month study abroad program, I realized that I had to make a real effort to make Spanish friends because it was so tempting to just hang out with fellow American students and speak the language I knew better. I was 20 years old, and I was eager to immerse myself in the Spanish culture. I loved it. Nevertheless, I remember feeling a little insecure about my Spanish abilities, even though I had been studying the language for five years and speaking Mexican Spanish since I was a child. Although I did meet some wonderful Spaniards, I regret that I spent most of my time with my American peers who provided a familiar comfort zone.

As a Peace Corps volunteer in West Africa two years later, I was faced with a similar situation. The difference between these two experiences is that I was a little older, and I was learning two new languages that I had never studied before: Portuguese and Portuguese-

Creole. Because I so much wanted to adapt to the new culture and blend into my community as much as possible, I made a concerted effort to spend most of my time with Guineans. However, since I lived in the capital city with about eight other Peace Corps volunteers, a dozen or so French English-speaking volunteers, volunteers from England, English-speaking UNICEF workers, and the American embassy employees, it was extremely easy to speak English daily. Even as a mature and experienced adult, really immersing myself in the target language was not always easy. What did help me quite a bit was that I was teaching English, and my language and culture were extremely revered and admired. I made a deal with my students that we would speak English in class and at school if they promised to speak Portuguese and Creole to me when we met informally. And while I learned a great deal of Portuguese during my two years in Guinea-Bissau, I do not think I would have been able to pass a standardized reading or math test in the language. Then again, that was not my goal.

Instrumental Motivation

Of all the students in this study, only those with the highest academic achievement expressed a clear goal

that could be attained, in part, by successfully acquiring English. Almost all students with below average academic achievement and a D or F in English class were unable to articulate any clear goals directly connected to learning English. Some of these students did say, however, that they wanted to get "a good job."

One of the reasons behind this lack of focused motivation is that in high schools across the nation, so much emphasis has been placed on preparing students for college that schools are not preparing students for other areas of interest and employment that do not necessarily require a college degree. Schools may not yet realize that as Hartman and Tarone (1999) point out, "immigrant students need to be able to write in English for a wide range of purposes for the rest of their working and earning lives" (Hartman, B. & Tarone, E., 1999).

Parental Involvement

Almost every English learner in this study who demonstrated the highest academic achievement and above average grades in English had parents who were actively involved in their schooling. Specifically, these parents' actions encouraged their children to do well in school. They provided the time and place for school work to be

completed, and they offered support and encouragement. The parents who felt their own skills were inadequate nevertheless inquired about the lessons their children were learning in school.

Rodby's (1999) study of nonnative English-speaking college freshmen also demonstrated the importance of social, family and peer support in the students' acquisition of academic English. This study sought to determine what motivated nonnative English speakers (NNES) to revise their writing, thereby improving their writing skills. Based on her observations, she theorized that "motivation results from a combination of factors often beyond the individual's control. It is produced by a confluence of relationships, ideologies, institutions, and activities with and in which the individual is engaged" (p. 47).

Encouraging family involvement in the education of their children may be difficult, however, as different cultures have different ideas about the role of parents in schools. As Diaz-Rico and Weed (1995) point out, some cultures give high status to teachers and consider it inappropriate to discuss school or related issues about

their children. Additionally, Monsivais (1996) says, "many studies have shown that poor Mexican families see little intrinsic value in acquiring an education. As a result, parents do not ordinarily get involved in their children's education, save for signing the report card. Students are supposed to do their homework without bothering the rest of the family" (p.1). Moreover, parental involvement largely depends on the educational experiences of the parent. Many, especially those who have not gone to high school, may not feel confident enough to approach a teacher or staff member, and others may not feel welcome at the school. Browning, Brinton, et al. (2001) explain that "parents of L2 learners often speak little or no English, leaving their children to negotiate the intricacies of the school system on their own" (p. 23). Diaz-Rico and Weed offer some insightful suggestions about what schools should and should not do to improve parental involvement among English learners. One suggestion they make, for example, is that schools should not make parents feel that they have to help their child rise to some kind of "idealized norm" because parents may attribute their "student's lack of success to parental failure" (p.259).

Educational Background and Illegal Immigration

Only four of the twenty-four participants in this study had attended a private school in Mexico, and all four of those students had high academic achievement and As in their English classes. Additionally, four of the twelve students with above average academic achievement had parents who had completed high school. Some even had some kind of career training beyond high school. Nearly every student with below average academic achievement and poor grades in English had parents with very limited education (ninth grade or less). All of these students had attended public schools in Mexico, and one girl's education was very interrupted by traveling back and forth between Mexico and the U.S. Most of the students who participated in this study are here illegally, although a few stated that their families are in the process of gaining legal resident status.

The socio-economic background of many Mexican immigrant students creates another obstacle. Many students may lack the skills they need to succeed enough in high school to go on to college. Adolescents' previous L1 literacy education has a strong impact on their English learning success. As Browning, Brinton et al. (2001)

point out, some "immigrant students may have had little schooling in their home country and may need to develop their general academic skills at the same time that they are learning English" (p. 11). They go on to explain that if students have limited literacy in their first language, they are unable to "transfer academic skills acquired in a first language to the tasks they are required to perform in English once they enter this country's schools" (p. 12).

Of those who do succeed, many may not qualify for state financial aid or loan programs because of their parents' legal status. Federal and state laws can make it difficult, if not impossible, for immigrant students to further their education in this country, which has become their home.

Perceptions of Prejudice and Discrimination

Of the students who had reported experiencing or feeling some form of prejudice or discrimination, only two had high academic achievement and good grades in English classes. These two students, however, had also attended private school and had parents who had completed high school in Mexico. In other words, other factors were in place that appeared to have a greater impact on these two

students than their negative experiences. Every other student who had reported perceiving prejudice or discrimination had average to below average academic achievement.

Suarez-Orozco's study of Mexican immigrants and their attitudes toward school proved quite interesting. In response to the question, "What is the most difficult thing about school?" many expressed racism and being put down by Americans (p.164). Many immigrants demonstrated signs of depression and low-self esteem, often having very low expectations for themselves. She concludes that a shift occurs in the psychosocial patterning of achievement motivation of Mexican-origin populations after they acquire minority status in the U.S.

While the issue of race or class is still very controversial, it is nonetheless important to consider these factors in the area of language acquisition. Because Mexicans make up the largest number of immigrants in the state of California, there seems to be more prejudice aimed at Mexican immigrants than those from other countries. Additionally, Mexicans make up more of the impoverished class in the state because they generally work in fields and factories. This position may also

contribute to their being looked down upon by the mainstream culture.

It may be that, with the anti-immigration politics in California during the last decade (Prop. 187, 1994; Prop. 227, 1998, Operation Border Patrol, etc.), there is a greater sense of social distance between immigrant second language learners and native learners in this state. There seems to be a great deal of animosity and negativism toward immigrants and non-English speakers, particularly towards Mexican immigrants. The passing of Proposition 227 in 1998 is evidence of California's anti-immigrant sentiment. While proponents claim that English only instruction is ultimately better for second language learners, the initiative illuminated some very negative public feelings and ideas about Mexican immigrants. Krashen (1997), who is actually a proponent of bilingual education, argues that "McQuillan and Tse (in press) reviewed publications appearing between 1984 and 1994, and reported that 87 percent of academic publications supported bilingual education, but newspaper and magazine opinion articles tended to be anti-bilingual, with only 45 percent supporting bilingual education" (pg. 2).

Immigrants from Mexico also may have a much more difficult time acculturating to mainstream American culture because it is relatively easy not to. Store owners of all ethnic backgrounds learn to speak Spanish and post signs in the window that proclaim, "Se habla español." The very strong connection to their native culture and language as well as the jobs they take often do not require them to speak much English.

Based on the present study, Mexican adolescent English learners, in general, are in a very difficult situation. Not only do they have to make a greater effort to socialize with non-Spanish speakers, they also have to overcome some very negative attitudes toward Mexicans in California. Negative experiences and perceptions of prejudice can have a tremendous impact on learning because "if language minority students are made to feel inferior because of accent or language status, they may have a defensive reaction against English and English speakers" (Diaz-Rico & Weed, 1995).

Pedagogical Implications

In light of this study's findings, it seems useful for secondary schools with large adolescent English learner populations to consider ways of creating learning environments that can mitigate against some of the challenges English learners face. Below I describe one curricular program initiative as well as more micro-classroom activities that have been found to be successful with English learners.

Camie Cohee of the Santa Barbara News-Press, who was reporting on Santa Barbara's new Cesar Chavez Dual-Language (bilingual) Immersion Charter School, conducted an extensive investigation of a very successful dual-language high school in Mexico called the Colegio Americano (American School). She found that one of the reasons the school was so successful in producing college-bound students, who are highly proficient in both Spanish and English, was the positive attitudes toward bilingualism and diversity.

"Through their vote [in 1998], Californians created a law that essentially makes it illegal for public schools to teach students in Spanish. Only charter schools, or private school, can sidestep that law.

The growing sentiment against Spanish drove many bilingual educators to look elsewhere for

work, including Joyce Martinez, who taught in Los Angeles and Denver before taking a job as head of curriculum at the American School this year.

'The big difference you'll find (at the American School in Mexico) is the attitude. Everybody wants to be bilingual, and people are proud that they can speak both," Martinez said. 'That's why I had to leave the States. I needed to go somewhere where bilingualism and multiculturalism is valued.'" (Santa Barbara News-Press, Sept. 2000).

This dual-language program essentially promotes an atmosphere of mutual respect and acceptance. The program sends a message that both the English and Spanish languages, as well as their respective cultures, are highly valued. It is a model for what Schumann (1976) describes as "social solidarity," which is necessary for optimal language learning to take place. This kind of positive atmosphere fosters feelings of confidence in the second language learner, thereby reducing feelings of anxiety and social distance and ultimately resulting in more successful second language achievement. Additionally, dual-language immersion schools offer English learners the opportunity to continue developing important skills in their first language.

Much of the research on second language acquisition with regard to high school learners suggests that

development of L1 literacy skills and critical literacy abilities is essential for success in L2 (Boyle & Peregoy, 2001; Wald, 1987; Scarcella, 1996; Blanton, 1999). Unfortunately for many high school L2 learners, L1 development stops as soon as they enter the American school system. In explaining the needs of Hispanic high school students, Wald (1987) inadvertently makes a strong argument for dual-language schools. He says that the encouragement to develop the skills further in both languages is facilitated, so that skills may transfer as they develop from the stronger to the weaker language.

Though a dual-language immersion program may not necessarily be the answer to improving academic language acquisition for secondary English learners, it is certainly the case that Rubidoux High School, and probably most other Southern California high schools, needs some kind of change. Of all the students at Rubidoux High School who are behind credits and at risk for not graduating, a significant number are English learners. Specifically, the number of LEP students at risk of not graduating is 38% in the eleventh grade, 23% in tenth grade, and 29 % in ninth grade. Overall, 43% of all students who are behind in credits are English learners.

This is more than double the percentage of English learners at the school. Unfortunately, because the school does not keep track of all the students who have dropped or transferred to a continuation school, there is no sure way to know which of these students were English learners who arrived in the U.S. as adolescents. Nevertheless, if 43% of at-risk students are English learners, then something must be done to help these students improve their chances of graduating. Perhaps a program could be created that incorporates some aspects of dual language immersion on a smaller scale.

Immediate Intervention in the Classroom

Providing students with equal opportunities for success in education does not necessarily mean that all students should have the same educational settings and programs. Mexican adolescent English Learners in Rubidoux have very different needs than, say, Chinese adolescent English learners in San Francisco or Persian adolescent English learners in Los Angeles. A dual-language immersion program at the secondary level is just one suggestion that could help accelerate English learners' acculturation process while developing English language and academic proficiency. Until these programs are

implemented, however, teachers should be aware of how they can help Mexican adolescent English learners succeed in the classroom.

One way of facilitating academic success is to incorporate more group learning opportunities in the classroom. A number of researchers have found that there are indeed differences among ethnic groups in terms of learning style preferences. Park (2000), for example, found that Mexican secondary English learners, as well as Vietnamese and Hmong English learners, show statistically greater preferences for group learning than do some of the other ethnic groups in the study. Additionally, all ethnic groups appeared to be visual learners. This study also found that "the longer immigrant students attend American schools, the greater the preferences for group learning they appear to develop" (p. 31). The findings in this study are important because much of the teaching that occurs at the secondary level is lecture. There is a need to develop and practice better teaching strategies, such as cooperative activities, that directly help students improve their language learning.

Another way of helping students succeed is to be aware of time constraints. Reid (1998) explains that,

"teachers and students must expect that improvement in ESL writing will be neither quick nor easy" (p.16). Her study of "eye" learners and "ear" learners found that resident ESL writers "need specific linguistic and rhetorical information, careful analysis of their writing weaknesses by ESL professionals, and consistent support and resources to improve their skills" (p. 16).

Building Bridges

Schools can also help integrate Mexican English learners into mainstream American culture. I should note that I do not believe that total assimilation is necessary for students to find success; however, a balanced sense of cultural identity with an emphasis on assimilation in the area of academics might be a more realistic goal. In other words, maintaining one's native language and culture is praiseworthy, but students will have greater success in academic English if there is also a willingness to adapt to the language and culture of the school. To this end, high school English learners might collaborate with advanced Spanish students to create social clubs and activities that would foster mutual understanding and respect. Perhaps American "ambassadors" could help new immigrant students adjust more easily to the new culture

of the country and the school by acting as peer mentors. There are probably a number of great and creative ideas that could help break down negative perceptions and relations among all students.

Anxiety, Testing and Unfair Expectations

Another area that educators need to address is the effect of the multiple state-mandated tests on English learners. The recently revised federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), also known as the No Child Left Behind Act, expects students who have attended school in the U.S. for at least three consecutive years to be tested in English for reading and language arts and meet the same proficiency standards as other students. Not meeting this expectation may result in detrimental effects on students as well as educators and communities.

"English-language learners (ELL) will be expected to reach the same levels of achievement as fluent English speakers, and schools where they don't will face escalating penalties" (Jehlen, 2002). This means that an entire school may be penalized if a certain group of students - namely, English learners - does not perform well.

This study demonstrates that students are not making this rapid progress in acquiring higher levels of English

that is expected of them. In fact, beyond the first year of arrival in the U.S., many students' level of proficiency in English did not coincide with the number of years they had been in the U.S. Of the five students who had been in the U.S. for three consecutive years, only two were at the Intermediate level of proficiency. The other three were behind by one year in proficiency. Given these findings, it is unfair to expect that adolescent immigrants will achieve at the same level as their fluent English-speaking counterparts.

Implementing these standardized tests and the high school exit exam has also created a certain amount of anxiety for high school ESL students who, even though they are barely learning to speak English, must take the SAT 9 and HSEE, knowing full well that they may not even understand the directions. This kind of experience can be devastating to what little confidence they might possess.

Krashen (1970 and 1985) has discussed the affective filter hypothesis and the notion that certain emotional variables, such as self-esteem and motivation, can hinder learning and increase anxiety during language practice. This only illuminates the unfairness of expecting

adolescent English-language learners to achieve at the same level as English-only students on high-stakes tests.

Conclusion

There is still much to be considered with regard to secondary L2 learners. This study was inspired by questions about why so many Mexican English learners were failing while others did so well, and what challenges high school immigrant students face? Further research is needed, however, in order to learn more about secondary English learners. For example, additional studies could investigate why students who are born in this country still retain LEP status at the secondary level, as well as differences and similarities between different English learners of various ethnic groups.

I hope that the findings in this thesis at least spark more interest in the subject and fuel changes in the way high school English learners are served. I also hope that students and parents will realize the value of an education and a balance of cultural identities.

APPENDIX A

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Does your family plan to stay in the U.S. permanently?
2. Does your family plan to return to Mexico in the next 3 years?
3. Have you visited Mexico since you arrived or do you want/plan to soon?
4. Do you have close relatives in Mexico?
5. Would you tell your family in Mexico to come to the U.S.?

How would you describe Americans to someone from your country?

6. They look different?
7. Americans are taller?
8. Americans entertain themselves differently?
9. Americans' basic style of life is different?
10. Young people's dating habits are different?
11. Americans have the same religion as Mexicans?
12. American children and parents respect each other?
13. Americans are as close to each other as Mexicans are?
14. Americans and Mexicans are very different?
15. Do you feel very different from an American?
16. If you stay here a long time, will you become more American?
17. Do you think Americans like Mexicans?
18. Do you hang out or socialize with Americans?

19. Do you think American classmates have a negative influence on your behavior?
20. Have your ideas of what Americans are like changed for the worse compared to what you thought when you were in Mexico?
21. Are you disappointed with life in the U.S.?
22. Do your parents want you to go to college in this country?
23. Do your parents want you to return to Mexico?
24. Did you learn English in Mexico?
25. Are your parents trying to learn English in a class?
26. Do you think it's a good idea to learn English?
27. Do you enjoy working with Americans?
28. Would you prefer to attend a school only for Mexicans?
29. Do you dislike Americans living in your neighborhood?
30. Do your parents have American friends?
31. Would you prefer to marry a Mexican?

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL INTERVIEW

1. When you are with your friends, do you speak English or Spanish? Why?
2. Do you feel comfortable talking to people who don't speak any Spanish? Why or why not?
3. Do you attend school dances and/or other school activities? Why or why not?
4. Do you say the Pledge of Allegiance at school? Why or why not?
5. Do you consider yourself a good student? Why or why not?
6. Are you trying to go to college? Why or why not? What do you want to do after high school?
7. Do you feel comfortable at this high school? Why or why not?
8. Do you feel that non-Hispanic Americans are nice to you? Why or why not? Have you ever experienced discrimination or prejudice?
9. Do you want to learn English, or do you feel you have to? Why or why not?
10. Do you think it's necessary to learn English in this country?
11. Do you watch television in English or in Spanish?
12. Do you listen to the radio in English or in Spanish?
13. Do you feel safe in your community/neighborhood? Why or why not?
14. Do you have any non-Hispanic friends? Why or why not?
15. Do your parents encourage/push you to do well in school? How?
16. What kind of school did you attend in Mexico?

17. How do you feel about taking the HSEE or the STAR/SAT
9 tests?

APPENDIX C

PARENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why did you leave Mexico?
2. What is your opinion of the United States?
3. Do you believe that life is easier in the U.S. or more difficult?
4. What would you prefer for your children to do after high school - get a job as soon as possible or go to college?
5. What kind of work do you do?
6. What is your yearly income?
7. Do you own your home?
8. What is your educational level? Did you go to college in Mexico?
9. What was your job in Mexico?
10. Do you feel you are respected in this country? Why or why not?
11. Do you hope to someday return to Mexico, or would you prefer to become a citizen of this country?
12. Do you think it's important to learn English in this country, or do you think you can get by without it?
13. How involved are you in your child's education? In what ways do you ensure his/her success at school?
14. What steps do you take to help your child learn English?

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